

K-C No. 14656

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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A stack of wipes for use in a wipes dispenser, comprising:
  - 5 a plurality of wipes, each wipe of the plurality of wipes formed from a portion of a common material; each wipe including a leading edge portion with a pleat-like zone located along at least a portion of a length of the leading edge portion and the pleat-like zone is distinct from an adjoining main portion of each wipe; and
  - 10 each wipe folded upon itself at least once and each wipe positioned relative to adjacent wipes to form the stack of wipes.
  2. The stack of claim 1 wherein the plurality of wipes comprises a plurality of wet wipes.
  3. The stack of claim 1 wherein the common material comprises a composite elastic material.
  - 15 4. The stack of claim 1 wherein the pleat-like zone extends along substantially an entire length of the leading edge portion.
  5. The stack of claim 1 wherein each wipe is folded upon itself twice.
  6. The stack of claim 1 wherein the stack of wipes is configured in a reach-in format to dispense the wipes from the wipes dispenser.
  - 20 7. The stack of claim 1 wherein each wipe in the plurality of wipes is discrete from each adjacent wipe.
  8. The stack of claim 1 wherein each wipe of the plurality of wipes includes a trailing edge with a pleat-like zone located along at least a portion of a length of the trailing edge.
  9. The stack of claim 1 wherein each wipe is non-interfolded with each adjacent wipe.
  - 25 10. The stack of claim 1 wherein each wipe is folded such that the leading edge portion is located between opposite sides of the wipe when the wipe is folded upon itself.
  11. A process for forming a stack of wipes comprising:
    - (a) providing a supply of a common material;
    - (b) forming a plurality of panels, each panel adjacent to at least one other panel;
    - 30 (c) creating a pleat-like zone located along at least one side of each panel;
    - (d) converting the plurality of panels into a plurality of wipes, each wipe of the plurality of wipes including a leading edge portion with the pleat-like zone located along at least a portion of a length of the leading edge portion and the pleat-like zone being distinct from an adjoining main portion of each wipe; and
    - (e) positioning each wipe relative to adjacent wipes to form the stack of wipes.
  - 35 12. The process of claim 11 wherein converting comprises folding at least once each wipe of the plurality of wipes.

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13. The process of claim 11 wherein creating comprises forming the pleat-like zone in a machine direction of the plurality of panels.
14. The process of claim 11 wherein converting comprises wetting the plurality of panels to form a stack of a plurality of wet wipes.
- 5 15. The process of claim 11 wherein creating comprises stretching the common material and heating the side of each panel.
16. The process of claim 15 wherein creating comprises embossing the side of each panel.
- 10 17. The process of claim 11 wherein creating comprises stretching the common material and applying pressure to the side of each panel.
18. The process of claim 15 wherein creating further comprises relaxing the common material.
19. The process of claim 16 wherein creating further comprises relaxing the common material.
- 15 20. The process of claim 17 wherein creating further comprises relaxing the common material.
21. The process of claim 11 wherein forming comprises separating the panels from one another along the pleat-like zone.
22. The process of claim 21 wherein the panels are separated from each other 20 intermediate the pleat-like zone so as to create the pleat-like zone along each side of the panels.
23. The process of claim 11 wherein providing comprises providing a composite elastic material as the common material.
24. The process of claim 23 wherein creating comprises melting a portion of the 25 composite elastic material.
25. The process of claim 11 further comprising:
  - (i) stretching the common material and thermally embossing a portion of the stretched common material along at least one edge of each panel;
  - (ii) slitting the common material along the thermal embossing portion of the common material to form a plurality of separate panels; and
  - 30 (iii) relaxing the plurality of separate panels to create the pleat-like zone.
26. The process of claim 11 wherein step (a) is followed by step (b), which is followed by step (c), and which is followed by step (d).
27. The process of claim 11 wherein converting comprises folding the wipes into a 35 zigzag configuration.

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28. The process of claim 27 wherein folding comprises locating the leading edge portion of each wipe between opposite sides of the wipe when the wipe is folded into the zigzag configuration.
29. The process of claim 11 wherein converting comprises folding the wipes into a non-interfolded configuration in the stack of wipes.
30. The process of claim 11 wherein converting comprises folding the wipes such that each wipe is discrete from each adjacent wipe in the stack of wipes.
31. A system for forming a stack of wipes comprising:
  - 10 a supply station which provides a supply of a common material;
  - 11 a pleat station which receives the common material and then forms a plurality of panels, each panel adjacent to at least one other panel, and which creates a pleat-like zone located along at least one side of each panel; and
  - 12 a converting station which converts the plurality of panels into a plurality of wipes, each wipe of the plurality of wipes including a leading edge portion with the pleat-like zone located along at least a portion of a length of the leading edge portion and the pleat-like zone being distinct from an adjoining main portion of each wipe and wherein each wipe is positioned relative to adjacent wipes to form the stack of wipes.
32. The system of claim 31 wherein the pleat station further comprises:
  - 20 a first speed control assembly which maintains the common material at a first speed;
  - 21 an embossing assembly which embosses the common material to define the plurality of panels; and
  - 22 a second speed control assembly which maintains the common material at a second speed, where the second speed is greater than the first speed.
33. The system of claim 32 wherein the embossing assembly includes the second speed control assembly.
34. The system of claim 32 wherein the pleat station further comprises a first separating assembly which separates the common material to then form the plurality of panels.
35. The system of claim 34 wherein the pleat station further comprise a third speed control assembly which maintains the common material at a third speed, where the third speed is about the same as the second speed, and a fourth speed control assembly which maintains the common material at a fourth speed, where the fourth speed is less than the third speed.
36. The system of claim 35 wherein the first separating assembly includes the third speed control assembly.
37. The system of claim 35 wherein the converting station further comprises a folding assembly which folds the plurality of panels into a plurality of folded panels and each of the plurality of folded panels is position relative to each adjacent folded panel to form a ribbon of

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folded panels.

38. The system of claim 37 wherein the converting station further comprises a second separating assembly which separates the ribbon to form the plurality of wipes of the stack of wipes, each wipe of the plurality of wipes including the leading edge portion with the

5 pleat-like zone.